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New National Study Indicates Significant Changes in Substance Use Treatment Admissions Patterns over the Past Decade

Between 1998 and 2008, five substances accounted for 96 percent of treatment admissions aged 12 and older: alcohol, opiates, marijuana, cocaine and stimulants (mainly methamphetamine).

From 1998 to 2008 there were marked changes in some patterns of substance use treatment admissions according to a study by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Although the concurrent abuse of both alcohol and drugs has remained widespread, the proportion of treatment admissions for the co-abuse of these substances has declined gradually yet significantly during this period from 44 percent to 38 percent.

At the same time there has been a steady rise in the proportion of treatment admissions attributed to drug abuse alone from 26 percent in 1998 to 37 percent in 2008, while the proportion of admissions attributed to alcohol alone fell from 27 percent in 1998 to 23 percent in 2008.

The study was sponsored by SAMHSA as part of its Data and Outcome initiative to create an integrated data strategy that provides key public health information on a wide range of behavioral health issues.

The study shows some other important trends over the past decade in the make up of treatment admissions involving people age 12 and older including:

- A rise in opiate admissions from 16 percent of admissions to 20 percent in 2008.
- A decline in cocaine admissions from 15 percent in 1998 to 11 percent in 2008.
- An increase in marijuana admissions from 13 percent in 1998 to 17 percent in 2008.
- A rise in stimulant admissions from 4 percent in 1998 to 6 percent in 2008.

The survey also showed that admissions for substance abuse treatment among those aged 12-17 increased by 13 percent between 1998 and 2002, but declined by 10 percent between 2002 and 2008. In addition, about four in five (79 percent) of adolescent treatment admissions involved marijuana as a primary or secondary substance, and almost half (48 percent) were referred to treatment through the criminal justice system.

Polydrug abuse (the use of two or more psychoactive drugs in combination) was reported by 55 percent of all admissions in 2008. Alcohol and opiates were reported more often as primary substances than as secondary substances. Overall, 61 percent of all treatment admissions reported

alcohol as a substance of abuse (41 percent as primary), and 27 percent of all admissions involved opiate abuse (20 percent as primary).

In 2000 only 24 percent of those 16 and older in treatment were unemployed; in 2008 37 percent of people in this treatment age group were unemployed.

"This survey provides valuable insight into the changing nature and source of substance abuse treatment admissions, said SAMHSA Administrator, Pamela S. Hyde, J.D. "It can guide us in developing more effective treatment programs and better approaches within healthcare systems for identifying and engaging those who may need help for substance abuse disorders - help that if given in time can make a critical difference in a person's recovery."

The survey report, National Admissions to Substance Abuse Treatment, was based on findings from SAMHSA's Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) for 1998 to 2008. The information in TEDS was reported by State-licensed substance abuse treatment facilities (primarily those that received public funding) from across the nation. The full report is available at: <http://www.dasis.samhsa.gov/teds08/teds2k8natweb.pdf>. It may also be obtained by calling the SAMHSA Health Information Network at 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727). For related publications and information, visit <http://www.samhsa.gov>.

SAMHSA is a public health agency within the Department of Health and Human Services. Its mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.